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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001900

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SUBJECT: EU PONDERES MILITARY OPTIONS FOR DR CONGO

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Classified By: Pol M-C Chris Davis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C//NF) Summary: During the week of December 8, the EU Council Secretariat prepared a list of options for an EU response to UN SG Ban Ki-Moon's request for an EU "bridging force" in the DRC. Foreign ministers discussed these options on December 11 at a dinner on the margins of the European Council in Brussels, reaching no conclusions. USEU expects the EU to find some way to provide assistance to the DRC, but does not expect a robust military intervention or true "bridging force," as the Member States most enthusiastic about providing military forces do not have the capability to provide the necessary enablers or the command and control capacity to lead the operation. End Summary.

¶2. (C//NF) USEU PolMC and PolOff on December 12 met with Didier Lenoir, Head of the Operations and Exercises Unit in the EU Council Secretariat's DG E VIII, and Ken Hume, one of the unit's action officers, to discuss the EU's potential response to UN SG Ban's request for a DRC "bridging force." Lenoir and Hume said EU SG/HR Solana had received the request in a private letter from Ban on December 5, and that Solana had directed Lenoir's unit to come up with options for an EU response. The Council Secretariat on December 11 presented those options to foreign ministers, who discussed the issue over dinner that night. Ministers reached no conclusions during the dinner, although the Political and Security Committee may be asked to take up the issue this week.

¶3. (C//NF) Ban reportedly asked the EU -- or Member States individually -- for a force capable of securing Goma and the airport, key humanitarian corridors and lines of communication, and population centers in North Kivu, until the UN can beef up MONUC per the UN's mandate. The EU estimates that accomplishing these tasks would require a brigade-sized force of approximately 3,000 troops. The Secreariat presented ministers with five options for an EU

response, only two of which would fulfill Ban's request, and none of which is generating much enthusiasm across the Member States.

14. (C//NF) The first, most robust option would be for the EU to dispatch its two standby Battlegroups to North Kivu. Each Battlegroup is a battalion-sized, combined-arms force, so deploying both would answer the need for a brigade-sized force of 3,000 or so. Battlegroups are also theoretically capable of the kinds of tasks required in the eastern DRC. However, Lenoir and Hume admitted that a Battlegroup deployment is "not a serious possibility" for a number of reasons. Even if the Member States agreed to dispatch the Battlegroups, they would need to come up with the necessary enablers to deploy and sustain those forces, a difficult task. In addition, because of the conditions on the ground and limitations on what the airstrip in Goma can handle, Hume estimated that a Battlegroup deployment to North Kivu would take one to two months -- not the five to fifteen days the EU advertises for Battlegroups.

15. (C//NF) The second, also highly unlikely, scenario would involve a force generated from among the Member States and led out of one of the national headquarters on which the EU draws for operations. Such a force would presumably resemble the EU force in Chad. In this scenario, the EU would still confront the problem of generating the necessary forces, headquarters, and enablers. While Lenoir and Hume said several Member States had expressed some interest in such a force -- Belgium, Sweden, and Finland -- none of the interested parties can provide the necessary headquarters or enablers. Hume also estimated that generating and deploying this kind of force would take three to four months, making it of questionable value as a "bridging force."

16. (C//NF) The third option would be to reinforce MONUC.

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Lenoir and Hume speculated that this scenario would resemble UNIFIL II in 2006, when Member States discussed the need for force generation in EU fora but made force pledges to the UN bilaterally. Also like UNIFIL II, generating bilateral force pledges would necessitate allaying Member States' concerns about the MONUC chain of command, and could involve an ad hoc strategic cell in New York like the UN set up for UNIFIL.

17. (C//NF) In the fourth option, the EU would provide a partial response to Ban's request, e.g. a force capable of accomplishing one of the required tasks, such as securing the Goma airport. Even this option would require a Battlegroup-sized unit, which would confront the same obstacles as options one and two. The fifth and final option would be to respond to Ban's letter by providing something entirely different, such as humanitarian assistance or repairs to Goma's runway. USEU assesses that this latter is a distinct possibility (if only because it was raised), but would involve minimal, if any, military force contributions.

18. (C//NF) The feeling in DG E VIII is that the diplomatic approach is back on track, so they would rather pursue a low-key approach and not be the provocation Nkunda said a EUFOR would be. Hume asked rhetorically whether a force of 3,000 troops is really required now, or if it would be required only if the situation deteriorated again. Comment: USEU suspects that this perspective is largely a reflection of the fact that the EU is unlikely to generate a robust force. End Comment.
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